

The usual thing on an Easter Sunday, is for us to read about the resurrection of Jesus, where we would get to hear about:

- an early morning visit to the tomb
- The surprise of seeing the stone rolled away
- The grave clothes just laying there
- We'd probably hear about the angel saying, "If you're looking for Jesus, He's not here. He is risen"
- maybe we would hear how Jesus appeared to them, behind locked doors
- and how Thomas who wasn't there, wouldn't believe, until he saw Jesus for himself.

That's pretty much a standard Easter Sunday, isn't it? But I want to do something a bit different today.

Today I want to take us, to the very throne-room of Heaven, to catch a glimpse of the resurrected Jesus

The Apostle John, was in exile on the Island of Patmos, off the coast of what we know as "Turkey". And an Angel appeared to him, and brought him a vision. And he wrote that vision down, and it is now the last book of our Bibles. It's called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

And, if you've ever tried to read "The Revelation", you may of had a bit of trouble understanding it. **And** if you ever meet someone who claims that they can explain the whole thing to you, my advice is, "Don't listen to them". They're speaking of things they do not understand – they're giving **their** interpretation of what it **may** mean. Many, many people have written detailed explanations, and interpretations of what it means... And I have never seen 2 accounts the same (unless one is following the teaching of the other)...

One day, I'm going to take us through the Book of Revelation, and teach on it, And I've already decided, "There's 4 phrases I'm going to use very often" :

- One phrase is "I can't tell you for sure what this bit refers to..."
- Another phrase will be "There are several possible things this could mean"...
- Another phrase will be "Even though we don't know exactly the sequence here, the overall picture that it paints, is **this**"
- And the fourth phrase that I will use often, is "God is in control"...

You see, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, is what's known as Apocalyptic Literature... It tells the story, with images and pictures. And in some cases, the images are clear what they mean, and in other cases, they can be quite obscure, and sometimes, they may have 2 or more meanings....

So, I'll leave the introduction at that, but I hope I haven't scared any of you off, by telling you it's a little difficult, because we **are** told that those who read it – particularly those who read it out aloud, are blessed... So, don't ever be scared away from it.

Today we're going to read Chapter 5, but first, let me set the scene:

In the Spirit, John has been invited into the Throne Room of heaven:

- Seated on the throne, is God in all His glory.
- And **around** the throne, are 24 elders, also sitting on thrones. Now, we don't know exactly who these 24 elders are. Some say they represent the 12 apostles and the 12 tribes of Israel. They could be 24 high ranking angels. We don't know. What we **do** know, is they occupy a high position in heaven, because they surround the throne of God, and because they're called "Elders".
- Even **closer** to the throne of God, are 4 living creatures (and I'm not going to describe them much, because it would take too long). But they may represent "the best or highest order, of every type of living creature in creation". And they continually praise God.

Everything about this picture, is about worship directed toward The Lord God Almighty.

Let me read from Chapter 4:8

⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the

throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.
They cast **their** crowns before the throne, saying,
¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

So, that sets the scene: Everything about it, is worshipping the Lord God Almighty. And this is where we turn to Chapter 5

5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, (who do you think that's talking about? Jesus)

[Jesus] has conquered, so that he **can** open the scroll and its seven seals."

Alright, this scroll has writing on its front **and** on its reverse – it's **full** of writing. And we find out later in the Revelation, that it reveals God's purpose through history.... As we see

horrifying stuff happening in the world today, it's very easy to find ourselves feeling, "Everything's gone out of control". But it's not. "History", is "His Story". God is in control.

Now, what are these 7 seals? The No.7 represents perfection/completeness. And a seal, marks ownership or authority, or the commitment of a contract. And so, the 7 seals on the scroll, represent God's mark – God's authority – God's ownership, of History. And because it's 7 seals, it's a **complete** ownership... **God** is in control – **complete** control, of history.

But John thought he wasn't going to get to see what history holds, because the scroll was still rolled up, and nobody was worthy to break the seals – no body was worthy, either to know, or to set in motion, the purposes of God through history...

But Jesus is worthy.

V6

⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Now it's starting to sound weird...

The Lion of Judah, is a lamb – Jesus is pictured, as a lamb. Only, it's not a lamb like we might picture this cute little cuddly thing – The Greek word "ἀρνίον", is a Ram Lamb, of at least a year old. Alright, so if you understand your sheep,

it's a 2-tooth Ram (or a Ram Hogget, depending on your definition) – nothing cute and cuddly about it. The Passover lamb, that they killed to celebrate the Passover, was a ram of at least a year old – a 2-tooth Ram – A ram in its youthful prime...

And yet this Ram, looks as if it's been slain, and yet it's alive... There's no mistaking the imagery here. Jesus, is our Passover lamb. Jesus was killed at the Passover. A Man, in His prime, slain as a sacrifice for our sins. And yet today, on this Easter Sunday, we celebrate, that He lives...

How else is Jesus described? And we have to remember, we're talking imagery here. Jesus does not actually look like a slaughtered Ram – it's imagery, used to reveal the truth about Jesus:

- This Ram, has 7 eyes. The No.7, is an important number. It means perfect/complete... So, 7 eyes, most probably means, He has perfect knowledge – He sees everything...

When Jesus came to planet Earth, He was **not** omniscient. He lowered Himself, to become as one of us. He **didn't** know everything. He **couldn't** be everywhere at once. He **couldn't** see everything at once...

Otherwise, He wouldn't be human. But now He is glorified. And Jesus is once again, all seeing, and all knowing.

- And this 2-tooth Ram, has 7 horns. You might be surprised that a **lamb** has horns, but you're not surprised that a 2-tooth Ram – a Ram a year or more old, has horns, are you??? But what **does** make it weird, is it's

got 7 horns. There's that number again "7" – the number of perfection – the number of completion. And if I were to tell you, that in the Bible, horns represent power,, what are we learning about the resurrected Jesus? He has complete power.

Jesus Christ, is all knowing, **and** He's all powerful. He sees everything. He knows everything. And He possesses all strength – all power – all might – all authority...

Are you seeing now, how this imagery, reveals the very nature of the risen Jesus?

V7

⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Alright, everything in Heaven, apart from God the Father, don't only worship God the Father – They also worship Jesus (God the Son). And have you ever wondered, "Is it right, for you to pray to Jesus?" Well, here's your answer: The Golden bowls full of incense, represent the prayers of the saints (Christians – disciples of Jesus). And they are offered to Jesus. So, there's your answer, "Yes. We can pray to God the Father, **and** we can pray to Jesus Christ, His Son."

V9

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,
"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed
people for God
from every tribe and language and people and
nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to
our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."

Jesus is worthy, because of who He is – He **is** God afterall...

But because of who Jesus is, Jesus has done, what He has done.

He was killed as a sacrifice. By His blood, He **ransomed people for God**. And not just Israel, but people from **every** tribe, **every** nation, **every** language group... We **were** unworthy. We **were** slaves to sin. We **were** cut off, from relationship with God. But with His blood, He paid the ransom, that set us free.

Jesus once said, ^{Matthew 19: 30} ... many who are first will be last, and the last first.

And that's the picture that's being painted for us here: **We're** not worthy – we're sinners... But He has made us a kingdom and priests to our God...

*In my daily Bible readings at the moment, I'm in Leviticus, and the rigmarole that the priests had to go through, to be worthy to serve God – all the religious rules and regulations they had to keep, and all of the ceremonies they had to perform, to **get** worthy, to serve in the Temple of God.... For a start, you had to be born into it... You had to be born into the line of Levi... But the blood of Jesus cuts through all of that, and we who are **not** worthy, become a kingdom and priests to our God...*

I want you to understand this: **I'm not your priest.** I'm not any closer to God than you are. If you are a disciple of Jesus, in Biblical terms, you are a saint. And so am I. And so we are priests together...

And because Jesus was slain to save us, **He** is worthy. He's worthy, to break the seals on the scroll. He is worthy, to set in motion, God's plan for this world – what has become, and what **will** become, this Earth's history...

V11

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

"To him who sits on the throne **and** to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!"

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The risen crucified one, is to be worshipped... Have you ever wondered is it right to worship Jesus? **Absolutely**, it's right to worship Jesus.

Yes, Jesus was always God. It was God, who lowered Himself to become a human. It was God the Son, who submitted to God the Father, to be sacrificed on the cross...

In the **Gospel** of John, he says that Jesus came into the world that He had made, but the world did not recognise Him... And of course, the outcome of that is "We crucified Him"...

But Jesus is not unrecognisable any longer. He is **not** one to be ignored. He is one to be worshipped.

If we were to read the rest of the Revelation, this is what we would discover:

The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, is **very** good news for the saints. And it's very **bad** news for those who reject Him.

Now, I've used the word "saints" a number of times today. Are there any saints here?

A "saint" is someone who gives their heart to Jesus. A "saint", is someone who realises they're **not** worthy, but know it is right for **them** to be worshipping the one who **is** worthy to be worshipped. The literal meaning of a "saint", is a "holy one". And so, to become a saint, we confess our sins to Him, and He forgives us, and He makes us righteous.

So, are there any saints here today?
Does anyone want to become a saint?

The risen Jesus, brings us into His Kingdom, and we're instantly "priests"... Our worship, is joined with the worship of the elders and the living creatures... As we worship the Ram, who was slain, to save us.

Let's pray: